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Two aspects of preschool teaching, teacher role and teacher style, are discussed in this paper. Teacher role refers to a teacher's behavior concerning the duties, responsibilities, and functions expected of the teacher by her clients and herself. Teacher style refers to the way in which individual teachers perform their roles. Teachers have had three basic role models: (1) maternal: keep children safe and busy. (2) therapeutic: help children express feelings and reduce tensions, and (3) instructional: transmit knowledge. The author predicts the instructional model is "in", but will meet resistance because of these limitations: (1) Academic and intellectual goals are confused. (2) Important teaching style elements (flexibility, warmth, enjoyment, and encouragement) have been neglected, and (3) The relationships between teachers and clients, particularly parents, have not been stressed. A new definition of the instructional role is needed. Current limited knowledge suggests role models may not be as important as individual teaching styles. (DO)

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TEACHING IN PRESCHOOLS: ROLES AND GOALS*

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TEACHING IN PRESCHOOLS: ROLES AND GOALS

Early childhood education is the most rapidly growing sector of the educational enterprise today. In the five years since Head Start began, the enrollment of children in preschool classes has just about doubled. The current figure for enrollment in preschools is almost four million (Gertler, 1968). This figure includes Head Start, day care, private and cooperative nurseries, laboratory schools, and parochial as well as public preschool programs.

This dramatic expansion has been accompanied by extensive research and evaluation of all types of preschool projects. Because the most recent review of research on teaching in the nursery school had been completed before the advent of Head Start and similar new programs (Sears and Dowley, 1963), I was asked to do an analysis and review of the most recent reports and findings on teaching in preschool settings for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education. In the course of working on this review, I have been reading and thinking a great deal about the nature and nurture of preschool teachers. During this year of review, we have searched through hundreds of research and evaluation reports of Head Start and other types of compensatory preschool programs. To date we have found only nine studies which reported findings based on the observations of teachers in Head Start classes. When all types of preschool programs are combined (day care, British nursery schools, special preschool projects, etc.) there is a total of 20 observational studies of preschool teachers in their classrooms reported since 1960. We have found also eleven comparative studies, i.e. studies in which different methods of preschool education have been compared. However, only one such comparative study included observations of the teachers in their classrooms (Katz, 1968). In

addition to the observational and comparative studies, we have found a few reports of research on the attitudes and backgrounds of preschool teachers.

In general, research on early childhood education (probably more appropriately called evaluation than research) is typified by pre- and post-tests of selected child behaviors without reference to the potential "effects" of teachers and their behavior.

This is not to say that there is a shortage of literature about teaching in preschools. In a dozen or more recent books, as well as in scores of articles, there are many discussions about teachers, especially about the proverbial "good" or "effective" teacher! In reading the research papers and reports we have found that the behavior of teachers is described in many ways. The term teaching style appears (Rashid, 1968; Garfunkel, 1968; Beller, n.d.), as do the terms teaching methods (cf. Gage, 1969) and teacher approach (Reichenberg-Hackett, 1964), teacher pattern (Prescott and Jones, 1969) and teacher role (Katz, 1969), teacher tempo and manner (Prescott & Jones, 1967), and teacher personality (Rosen, 1968). Often the same author uses several of these terms interchangeably.

Because this confusion of terms makes the task of synthesis and analysis a complex and difficult one, I have found it quite useful to make a basic distinction between two aspects of teaching: one I shall refer to as teacher role, and the other as teacher style.

Role and Style

The term role describes that aspect of the teacher's behavior which concerns the duties, responsibilities and functions expected of the teacher by her clients and herself. The term teacher style, on the other hand, is that aspect of the teacher's behavior which we might call the individual renderings with which the teacher's role is performed. For example, the role of the teacher (i.e. her

functions, duties, etc.) might be that of the instructor, but the styles of performing this instructor role might be "humorous" or "warm", or "authoritarian" or "cold".

Role

The term role has had extensive use in educational literature (cf. Wallen and Travers, 1963). The term or concept of role provides a fairly simple way of examining and thinking about a variety of social positions and the expectations of behavior which surround these positions.

One of the important elements of the concept of role is that the behaviors expected of people occupying social roles are largely independent of the individual person occupying the role at any given time. Thus, whether it is Mrs. Smith or Miss Jones occupying the role of teacher, the behaviors each of them is expected to perform do not change. The expected behaviors associated with the social role of teacher are said to be independent of the individual role-incumbent.

Style

While expectations held for the teacher's role concern her functions, duties and responsibilities towards her clients (children, parents and employers), style concerns matters of how the role is performed. Style, as I have already suggested, describes individual differences in the ways teachers render or perform their roles. Such qualities as humor, warmth, creativity, passivity, spontaneity, for example, can be thought of as style aspects of teaching.

Role Models

If you will accept the distinction I have attempted to draw between role and style, then, I want to propose that teachers of young children have had three

basic role models. The first of these role models can be described as the maternal model. The major emphasis or function of this model is to keep children safe and comfortable, busy and happy. A major responsibility of the teacher is to help the children to become what is popularly called "well-behaved". It represents a view of teachers as substitutes for mothers, teachers being expected to fulfill the mothers' responsibilities, duties and functions while the child is away from home.

A second role model which has had a strong and productive place in the development of preschool education can be called the therapeutic model. The major functions of the teacher in this model are to help children to express inner feelings, to work out tensions, to help the young to resolve hypothesized conflicts of early development (Read, 1960, pp 12-15). The focus is on the children's mental health (Gans, 1947), to "correct any defective socialization processes and to strengthen the child's ego functioning" (Mattick, 1968, p. 685). Moustakas describes the teacher's role in this way:

> ...to help children grow both as unique individuals and as important members of the group, help them feel comfortable in expressing themselves, and to help them develop a positive attitude toward school... to help children resolve their tensions and conflicts. (1966, p. 59)

A third model is that which we might call the instructional model. The functions and duties of the teacher of this model include the deliberate transmission of information and knowledge, and the conscious training of children in skills--what we sometimes call "direct" instruction or "structured" programs.

Each of these three role models, maternal, therapeutic and instructional, has its own variants. Each has also its own particular strengths and weaknesses. In general, the maternal model is not being advocated today, although it still

exists in practice (Prescott and Jones, 1967). Indeed, recent research has stimulated efforts to help mothers to become better teachers, or to adopt a teacher role model! (Hess and Shipman, n.d., see also Caldwell, 1967) The maternal role model is sometimes referred to disparagingly as "custodial care", and is often implied in the phrase which describes the nursery school as "glorified babysitting".

The therapeutic model still enjoys an important place in early childhood education (cf. Biber and Franklin, 1967). However, some shifts in emphasis seem to be occurring. We are moving away from building a protective and psychologically safe environment around the vulnerable young organism toward helping the young child to develop coping strengths and coping strategies with which to encounter his natural environment.

No doubt elements of all of the three models are found in all teachers. Certainly, people do not come in "pure" types of anything! However, as I perceive current trends in our field, the instructional model is "in". And I sense a great resistance to it among those of us whose nursery school training and experiences are rooted in the pre-Sputnick, pre-Head Start era. It is to this resistance that I especially want to turn now.

Problems with the Instructional Role Model

There are three major problems with the instructional role model. The first concerns the confusion between academic versus intellectual goals; the second is related to problems of teaching style, and the third is the matter of teacher-client relations.

Academic versus Intellectual Goals. The instructional role model is a model in which the function of the teacher is to transmit knowledge and skills to the children in a premeditated fashion. In this model, the curriculum does not

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emerge as children's interests are spontaneously expressed or awakened. The teacher plans what knowledge and skills shall be taught and learned before she meets the individual children in her class (cf. Gray et al. 1966; Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966).

I find it useful to make a distinction between academic and intellectual goals associated with the instructional model. Academic goals have to do with helping children to adjust to school, to acquire testable skills, and to learn to conform to the daily routines and expectations of the typical public school classroom, that is, to acquire the role of pupil. Gracey, writing of kindergarten as "academic boot camp" points out that

> The unique job of the kindergarten in the educational division of labor seems rather to be teaching children the student role...the repertoire of behavior and attitudes regarded by educators as appropriate to children in school... the learning of classroom routines...all the command signals and the expected responses to them. (1968, pp. 289-290).

This function is now being urged upon the nursery school, and represents academic emphases rather than intellectual ones.

Intellectual goals can be thought of as helping the child to develop problem-seeking and problem-solving skills, guiding and encouraging his curiosity about his total environment. The emphasis is upon the childrens' motivation to learn, rather than motivation to achieve, helping the child to acquire the role of learner. While planners for intellectually oriented programs may have a priori commitments to specific knowledge and skills to be acquired by the children, they are more likely to be sensitive to stages of learning, individual differences in learning styles and in readiness than are academic planners. Certainly the academically-oriented planners are interested in the children's intellectual growth. But the intellectual goals are often "lost in translation", and such loss is very likely due to the fact that intellectual stimulation is

dependent on teachers' styles rather than on their roles.

Problems of Teaching Style. I suggested earlier that the term style is a way of talking about the differences between teachers within any given role model. For example, the Montessori Method has a particular role model associated with it (a variant of the instructional role model). The Montessori literature defines the duties, functions and responsibilities of the teacher. But if you see more than two or three Montessori teachers at work, you will certainly see differences in style. Similarly, for the Bereiter-Engelmann method, which I have frequently observed on our campus, you can see great variations in style. Some teachers work with humor, with zest, or with warmth; some with alertness and vitality; others are dull, sullen, or serious, and some are detached, or authoritarian.

Many nursery school teachers have developed their own teaching behavior along the lines of the therapeutic role model. But it is safe to say that there will be great variations in style among them. Some are more active or intrusive than others, some are more affable, and so forth. These individual differences between them exist even though they may perceive their functions and responsibilities (i.e. role model) very similarly.

Research cannot directly answer our questions about the effects of different teacher roles and styles. The research questions have not been asked in quite that way. However, from the research that we have, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that a teacher's style is a stronger determinant of her effectiveness with children than is the role model to which she is committed. It may be true that certain role models tend to attract people with particular style inclinations. Warmer people may be attracted to the therapeutic model, or serious people may find the instructional model more congenial. These are questions that have not yet been studied. But more importantly, the role and style aspects of teacher

behavior may not be inextricably linked to each other. Let us turn for a moment to some of the recent research on teaching young children.

Conners and Eisenberg (n.d.) studied the behavior of thirty-eight Head Start teachers in the 1965 six-week summer Head Start program in Baltimore, Maryland. It should be noted that all of the teachers in their sample were experienced public school teachers. The teachers were observed by trained observers.

> Observations were recorded as discrete episodes...Each statement of the teacher to a child or the group was recorded verbatim. An episode was defined as a change in the triangular relationship between teachers, children and the environment (p. 4)

The episodes recorded in this way were scored on the basis of their "values" (i.e. the implicit goals which these activities were judged to serve,) such as the development of the self-concept, consideration for others, intellectual growth, neatness etc., teachers were classified as high, medium or low on each of the value variables. In addition, the teachers were given a global rating on continua of warmth versus coldness, permissiveness versus restrictiveness, activity versus passivity, and variety versus non-variety.

The children's growth was assessed by administering the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) at the beginning and at the end of the Head Start program. The data collected in this way indicated that the teachers who were rated "high" on valuing intellectual growth, and who were <u>also</u> rated was "warm", produced the greatest growth in the children's intelligence as measured by the PPVT. The teachers' emphasis on intellectual growth <u>alone</u> did not foster growth; but nor did warmth <u>alone</u>.

Conners and Eisenberg reported that

> When the PPVT changes of high and low intellectual oriented teachers are considered, it is the teachers who are <u>also</u> high on the

> global ratings of warmth...who produce the most change; high intellectual teachers who are low on warmth produce about the same amount of change as low intellectual teachers...(p. 12)

It seems to me that these findings support the proposition that the instructional role has a positive effect on children if the style of the teacher is also warm.

E. Kuno Beller's study of Head Start teachers supports this proposition. In a reputational study of teachers identified by their supervisors as "good" or "poor", Beller looked at the effects of such types of teachers on children's problem-solving skills. Beller reports that the children whose teachers

> made less distinction between work and play, who were more flexible in their classroom arrangements, and more flexible in programming their instruction performed better on our problem-solving task...(pp. 6-7)

The attributes of teachers studied by Beller are what I would call "style" variables, and it would seem to be their styles which distinguish the "good" and the "poor" teachers from each other.

Prescott and Jones (1967) studied 104 teachers in Los Angeles day care centers. Both children and adults were observed in this fascinating study of the day care center as a child rearing environment. The children's behavior was described on a five-point continuum of level of interest or involvement in their activities. The observations of the teachers were, of course, more complex. The Prescott and Jones work is by far the most interesting single piece of research we have seen in this year of review, and there is no way to do justice to their detailed report here. I want to mention that in their results, they indicate that the level of interest and involvement of the children is high

> when teachers behave in certain specific ways. Positive responses from children are highly related to encouragement. They are also related to teacher emphasis on verbal skills, and to lessons in consideration and creativity and pleasure, awe and wonder. They are negatively

> related to restriction, guidance and to lessons in control and restraint and rules of social living (p. 341).

It seems that we are beginning to see some evidence to support the proposition that the instructional model, both in its academic and intellectual variants, can be performed with warmth, and can indeed carry with it therapeutic value for those children who need it. More empirical studies of teacher behavior and its effects on children are urgently needed before we can denounce any teacher role model. From the reports we are getting of the modern British infant school, it appears that the instructional model, with a strong intellectual emphasis, can be performed in such a way that teachers maintain great respect for and enjoyment of children. Respect and enjoyment seem to be style elements of teaching.

Perhaps one of the most serious problems with the now popular instructional role model is that the role is easily "packaged" and "sold", but that the all-important style elements, such as flexibility, warmth, enjoyment, and encouragement are neglected. They are aspects of teaching not easily "packaged". There is some evidence to indicate that such neglect of style can have deleterious effects on children (Prescott & Jones, 1967, Katz, 1969).

At this point, it might be wise to emphasize that roles and styles of teaching are certainly not the only important determinants of the outcomes of preschool education. Size of center (e.g. number of children served by a given day care center), types of sponsorship, the quality and quantity of physical space and equipment are significant factors in preschool education (Prescott & Jones, 1967). Climate is also an important determinant of how teachers spend their time (Wilensky, 1966). Teachers vary significantly when you compare them with themselves in winter and in spring!

Another factor which has not been studied, but impresses me as I visit programs is the distribution of autonomy or decision-making authority in a

given preschool center. An example of this came up during a recent visit to a Head Start day care center in the midwest.

I sat down to have lunch with the children at the center. The children were very friendly, and the food was very good. As I was eating my lunch, I said to the little boy next to me,

> "What is this red stuff we're eating?"
> "Jello" he said.
> "Where did it come from?" I asked.
> "Out there" he said pointing in the direction of the kitchen.
> "Where do the people out there get it?"
> "From the tree."
> "What kind of tree?"
> "A jello tree."
> "Have you ever seen a jello tree?"
> "Uh huh."
> "Where did you see a jello tree?"
> "Downtown? he answered.
> "On T.V." said another boy at the table.
> "On a apple tree" said another.

This conversation went on to many other topics. But I later asked the young teacher whether the children could be included in preparing their food. I suggested that some children could stir, some could watch, or taste, or measure, and so forth. The teacher's reply to me was "You talk to the cook!".

As it turned out, the cook was an experienced and awesome woman. And she had a territory, her own area of command, and nobody was allowed in that territory, certainly not dirty little boys with dirty little hands! (She was unaware that the state health regulations were also on her side.) The cook had an area of autonomy; the teachers were afraid to cross her, and the lines of decision-making authority had its impact on the curriculum. Until it was suggested to them, the teachers did not know that jello can be prepared in the classroom. They did not have a backlog of skills and training on which to draw. I am sure they have been making jello ever since! My friends with elementary school backgrounds tell me that the janitor has similar effects on the elementary

classroom teachers' autonomy.

Teacher-Client Relationships

This brings me to the third problem associated with the instructional role model: the relationships between teachers and their clients.

Whenever I ask a group of preschool teachers "Who is your client?" the response is invariably "the child". This seems reasonable, since the child is the direct recipient of the teachers' services. But like people in other professional roles, teachers have a set or a hierarchy of clients who benefit from their services. The teacher's set of clients includes the parents, the children, the school board or other employers, and the "community". In general, schools are thought to serve primarily the "public interest". It seems to me that in preschools, the primary client is really the parent. Nursery school teachers have traditionally emphasized building close relationships with parents, and on the whole, they have worked with parents who were receptive to their views on preschool education.

Today, large numbers of preschool teachers are actively involved in trying to help parents to see the soundness of their views, methods, techniques, styles and goals for young children. Many teachers, especially those who have been identified with nursery education in the days before Head Start, have a sophisticated and complex view of the nature of learning and development. They talk of children's learning through play, through sensory-motor experiences, through peer-group interaction, through self-selected activities, creative activities, exploration and experimentation. They make complex assumptions about the psychodynamics of growth and development, and the meaning of behavior. These ideas are hard for many parents to understand. The difficulty in understanding is reflected in the not uncommon complaint that in the classrooms of such teachers the children

"just play". Preschool teachers are under great pressure, sometimes openly, sometimes indirectly, to prepare children for school. They are responsible to parents who naturally seek what to them is tangible, sensible evidence that they are in fact preparing children for the role of pupil. As Bettye Caldwell (1967) has pointed out "mothers are looking for professional leadership to design and provide childcare facilities that help prepare their children for today's achievement-oriented culture." (p. 18) Many parents are expecting teachers to perform a teacher role, and to some extent to adopt a teaching style that teachers do not like. It seems to me that the differences between the expectations of parents and of preschool teachers constitute one of the most serious issues facing the profession.

No systematic study of the conflicting expectations of parents and teachers in Head Start has been found. However, there are some informal reports of such problems. In an extensive survey of summer Head Start for the state of Massachusetts in 1965, Curwood (1965) reported, on the basis of parent interviews that

> Most of the (Head Start) programs, even with a minimal child development emphasis, failed to meet the parents' expectations for more formal education (p. 144)

When Wolff (1967) asked teachers and parents to suggest improvements in the Head Start curriculum, teachers listed such items as "more materials, more time on emotional and social development" etc. Parents suggested "more teaching, more work including ABC's, numbers" etc. (p. 14). Similar problems are brought out in Polly Greenberg's very sensitive and moving account of Head Start in Mississippi (1969)

> We had to interpret parents' insistence on having children learn ABCs to mean they were insisting that the children learn <u>reading</u> ...If CDGM (Child Development Group of Mississippi)

> planners were going to claim to be deeply concerned with community values and parents' ideas, we could not stoically resist parental conviction that reading is critically important (p. 162).

Sieber and Wilder (1967) studied the teacher role preferences of first, fifth and tenth grade teachers and the parents of their children. The investigators identified four basic role models: content oriented, control oriented, discovery oriented and sympathy oriented. In brief, Sieber and Wilder found that the younger the child, the more true it was that the mother preferred a "control oriented"teacher, and this was especially true of the working class mothers of their sample. Only 36% of all the mothers interviewed preferred the "discovery oriented" role model, but 56% of the teachers identified themselves with this model. Overall, across each social class and grade, 69% of all the mothers had for their child a teacher whose own role model was one they did not prefer for their child. The authors suggest that as parents' participation in the schools increases, the level of dissatisfaction will also increase. Unfortunately, no study of this kind has been carried out with Head Start teachers and parents. Such research would be most useful. It is my impression that the level of dissatisfaction, that is the discrepancy between the teachers' preferred role and the mothers' preferred teacher role, would reach about 80%.

Implications for the Future

The first notion implied by our current (though limited) knowledge is that the role models to which teachers are committed may not be as important to their effectiveness with children as their individual styles. We need a good deal more research on these aspects of teaching. But from the evidence now available, we are not in a position to rule out the instructional role model as a whole. Perhaps we are in need of a fresh conceptualization; something like that implied in Caldwell's term "nurcher" from the verb "to nurture" (Caldwell, 1967, p. 18). It seems entirely feasible to adopt an instructional role, to perform this role

with the style characteristics which facilitate growth, and to help children to become both learners and pupils.

The second implication drawn from current trends is that if nursery school teachers continue to do what they customarily have been doing (perhaps it is a healthy mixture of a therapeutic role plus a growing intellectual emphasis) and do it very well, that they will lose the very parents who most need their help, their skills and their understanding. Whatever may be wrong with our public schools, we as preschool educators have no right to deny the child's need to acquire the social role of pupil.

Finally, a most important implication of current developments is that when we teach the child his ABCs, colors, shapes and school-type tasks, we may be setting off something between that child and his parent which could make a profound difference. It may be that because he has gone home with a particular achievement you have increased his mother's confidence in his future. It may be that a mother's confidence in her child's future does have continuing positive effects on his development.

So perhaps the most important question to ask ourselves concerning our teaching roles, styles and goals is what am I doing to increase the mothers' confidence in the future of their children? Perhaps our resistance to current pressures and trends is a reflection of our sensitivity to children; but unless we respond just as sensitively to their parents, what we do for their children may be lost.

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